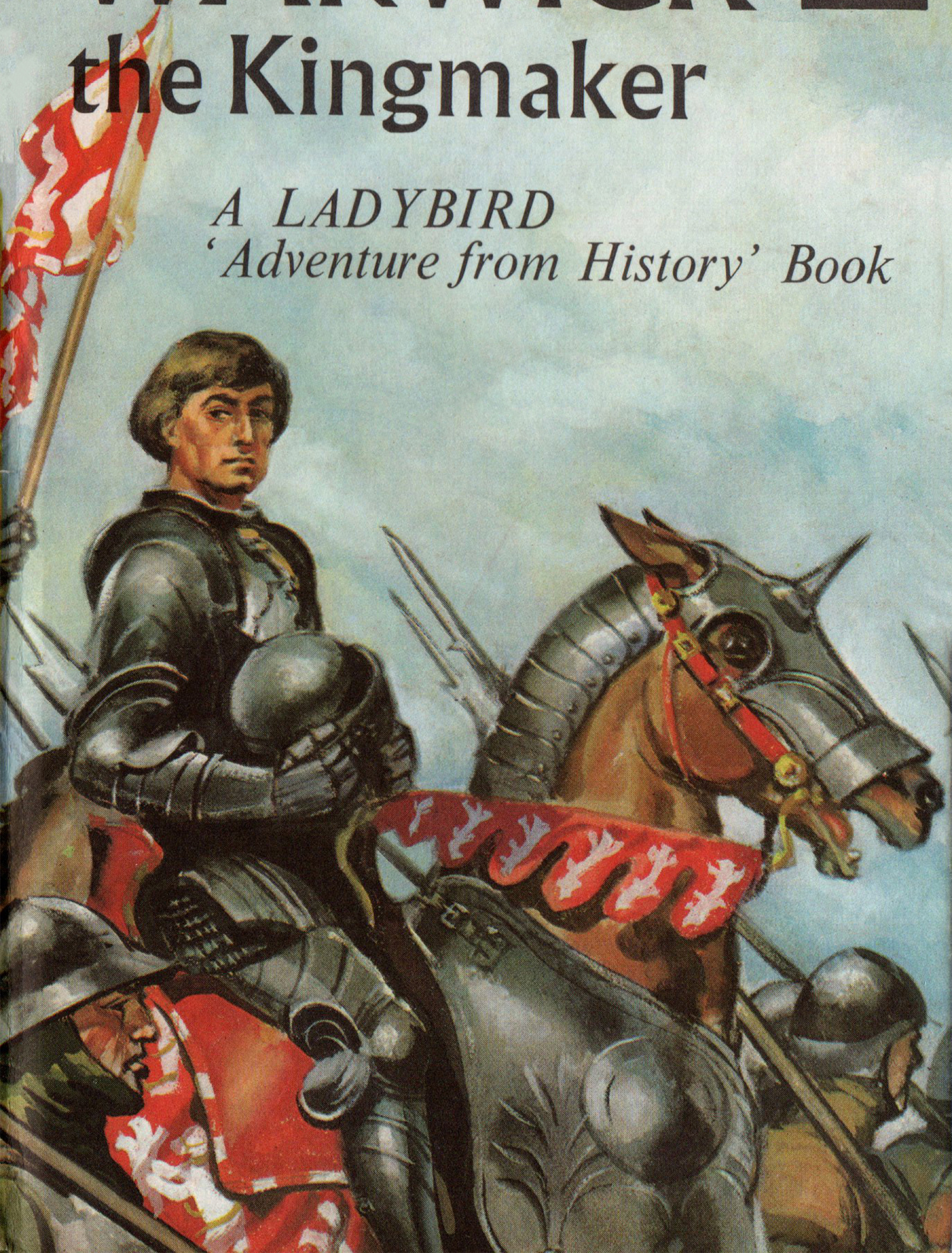
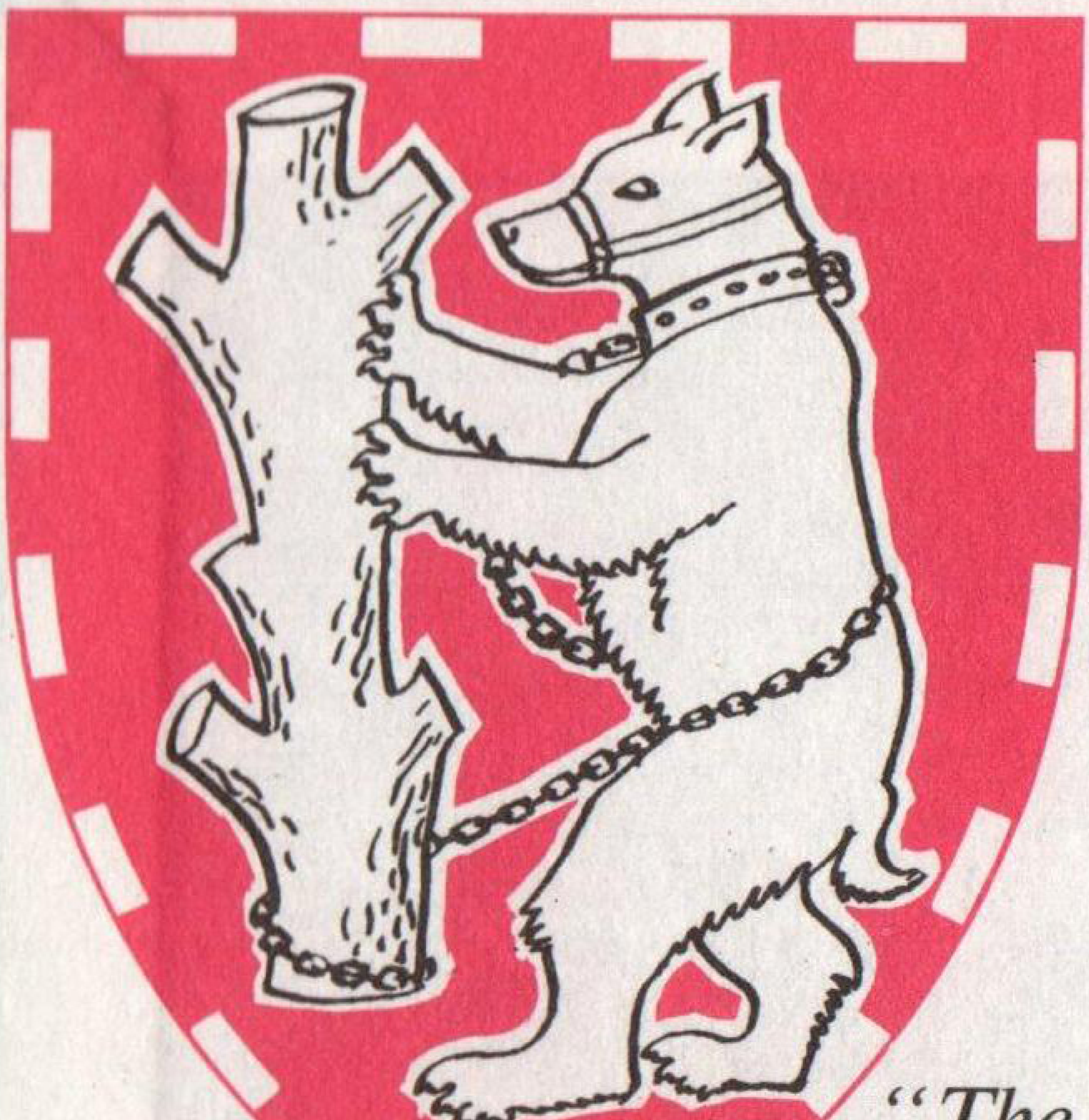
WARWICK the Kingmaker

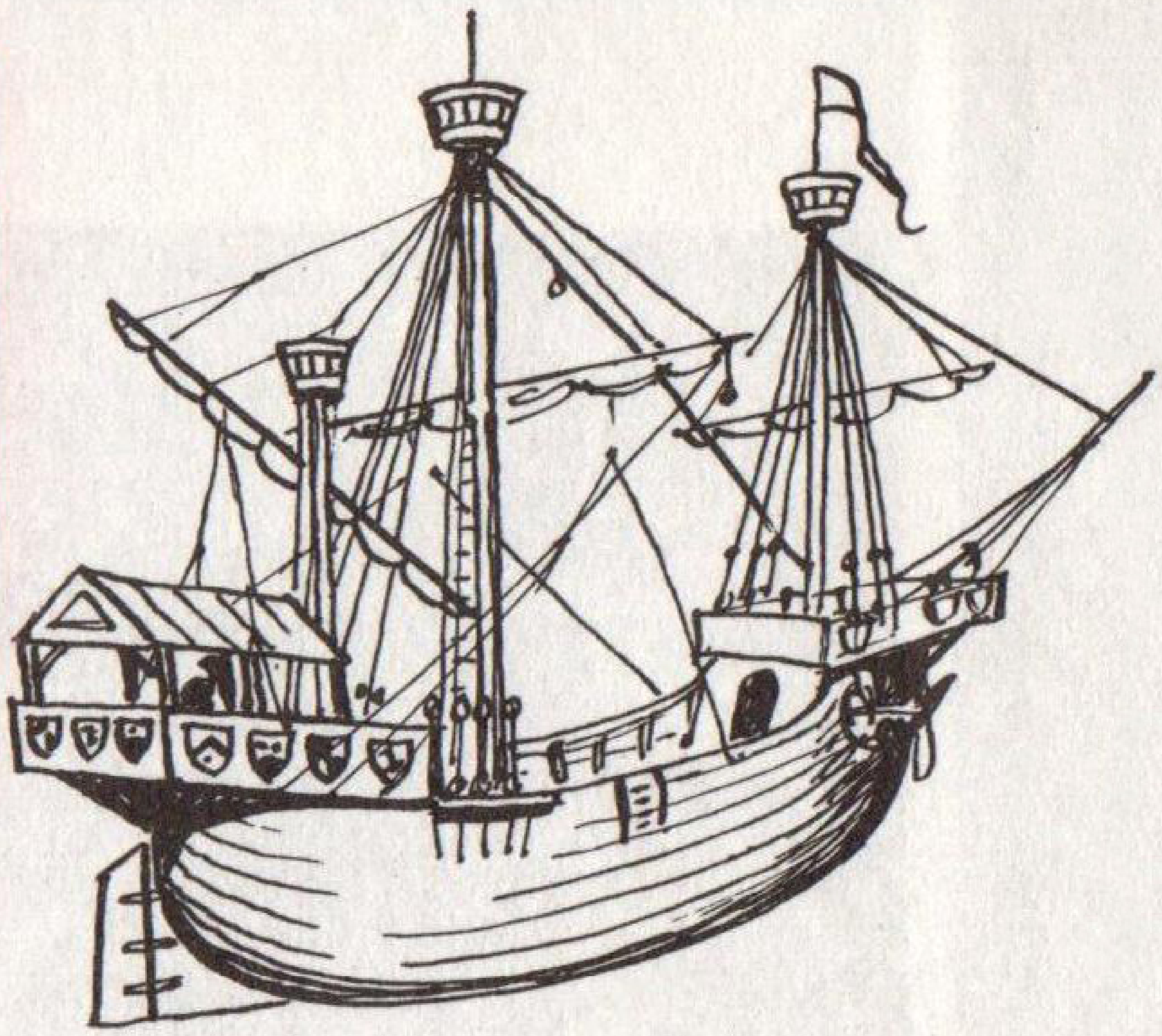
A LADYBIRD
'Adventure from History' Book





Warwick's Badge

"The Bear and Ragged Staff"



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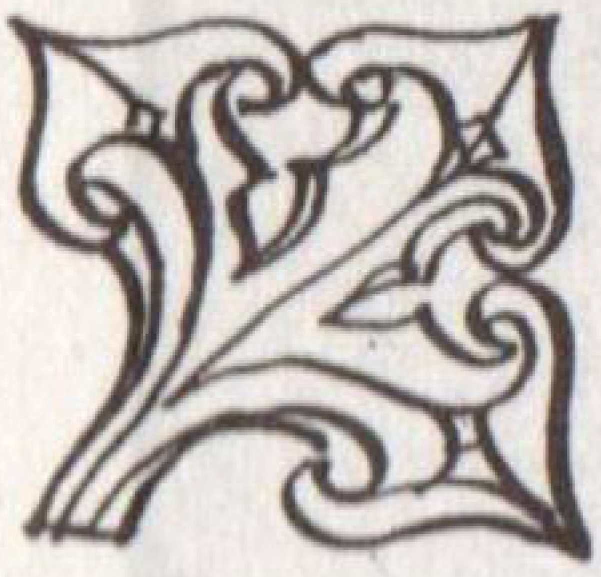

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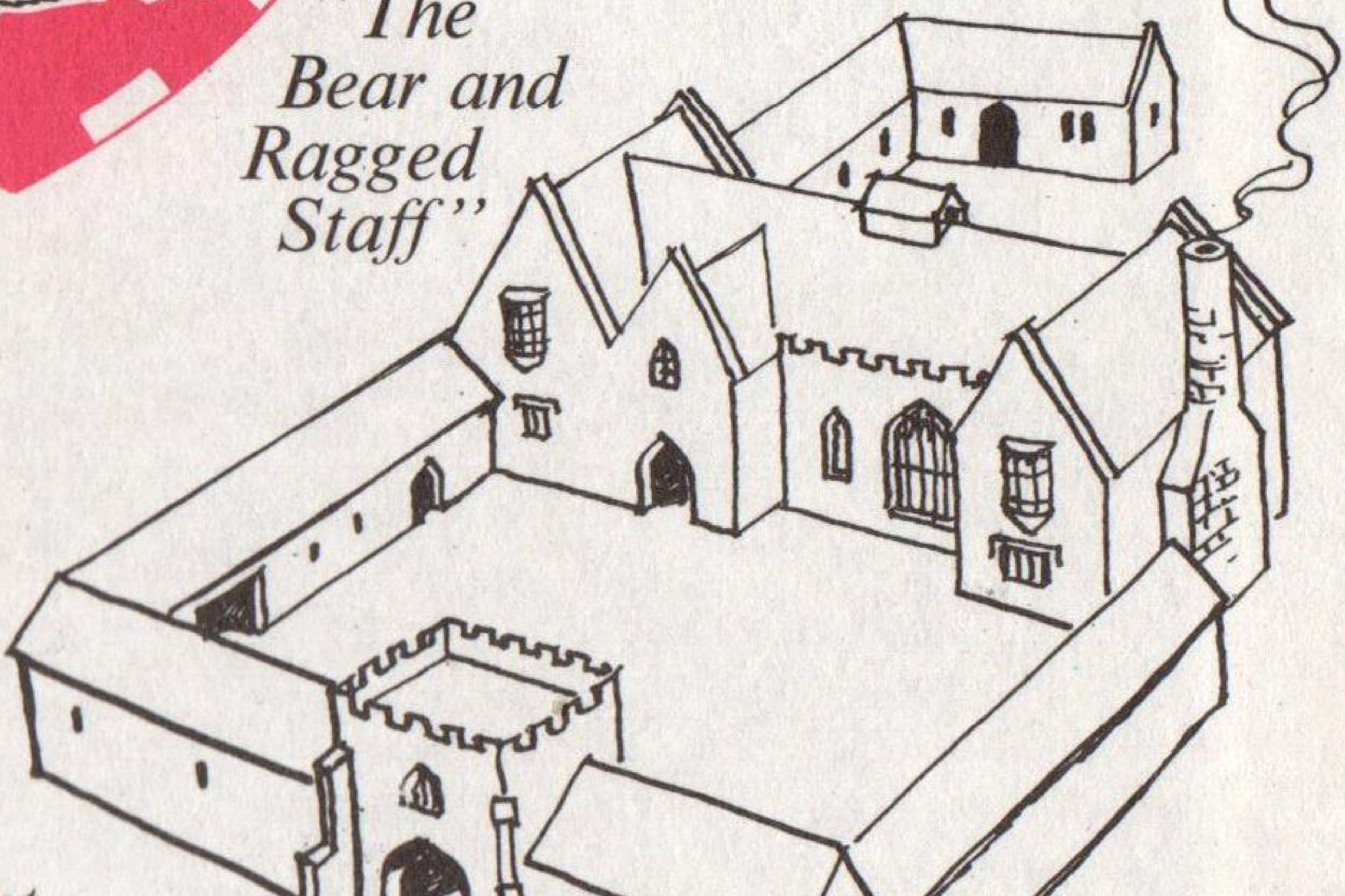

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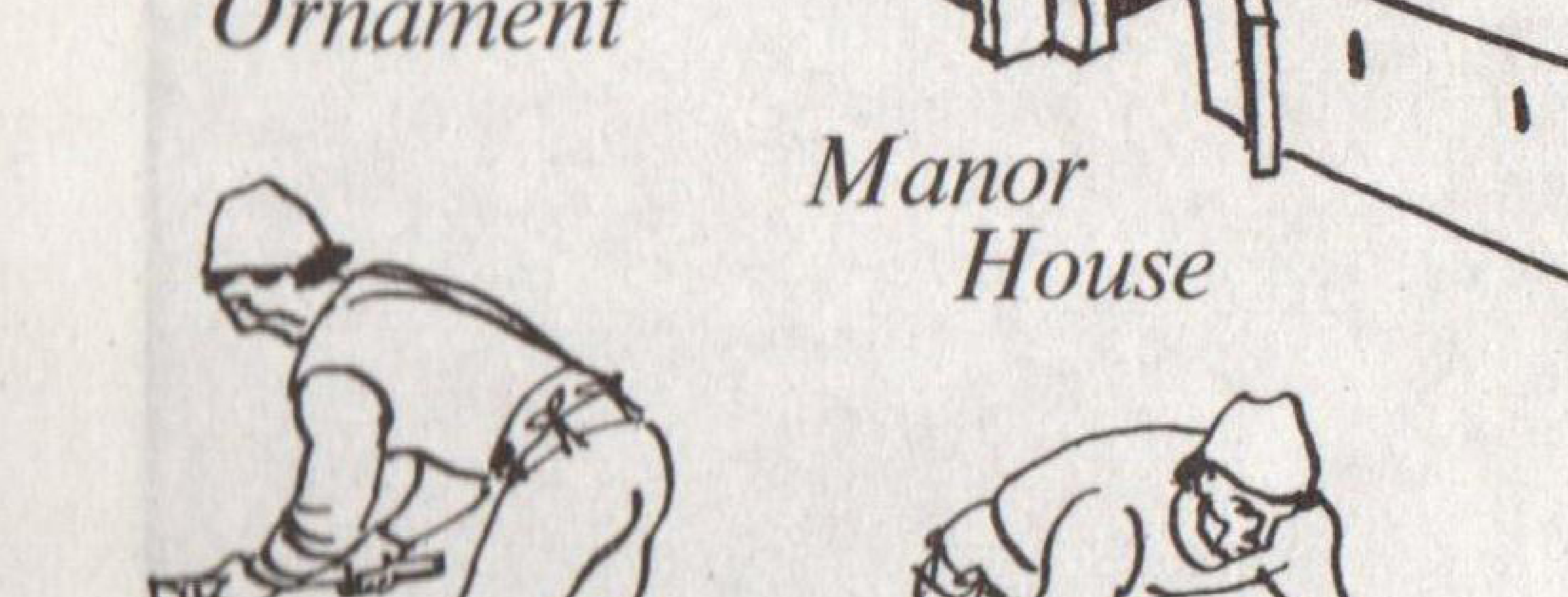

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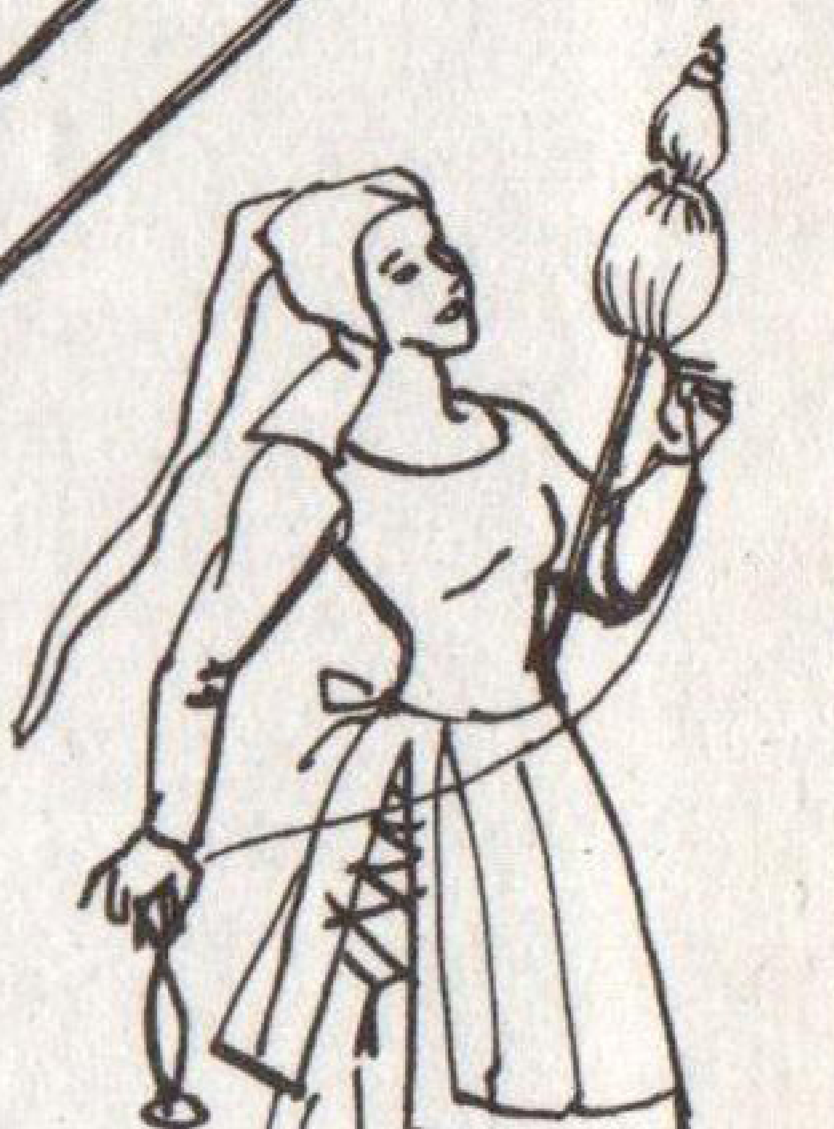

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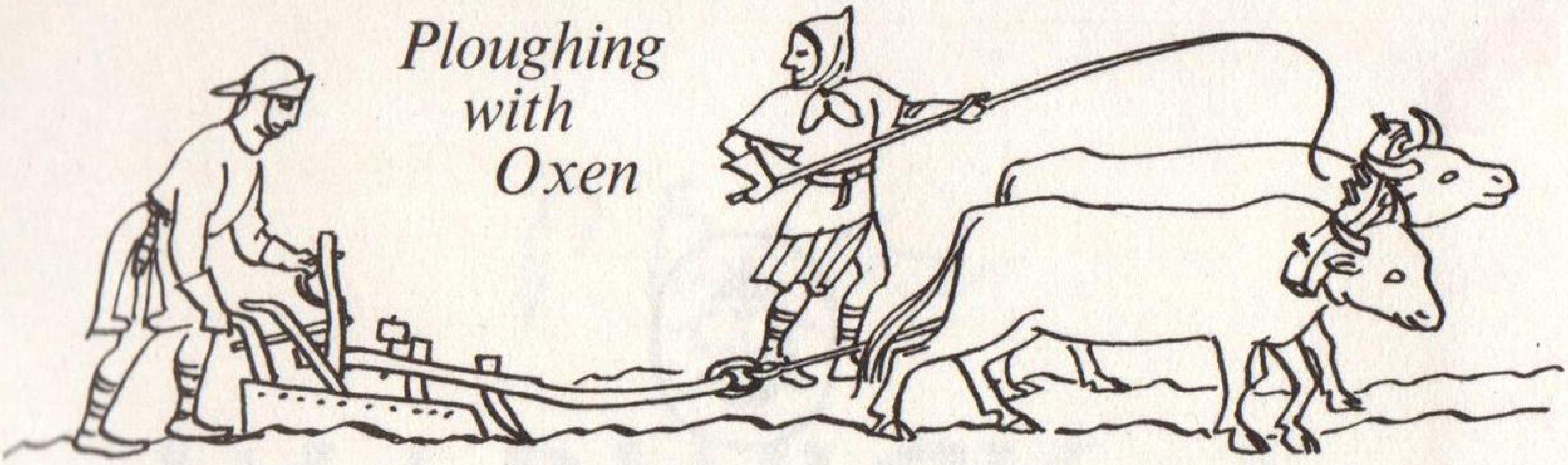

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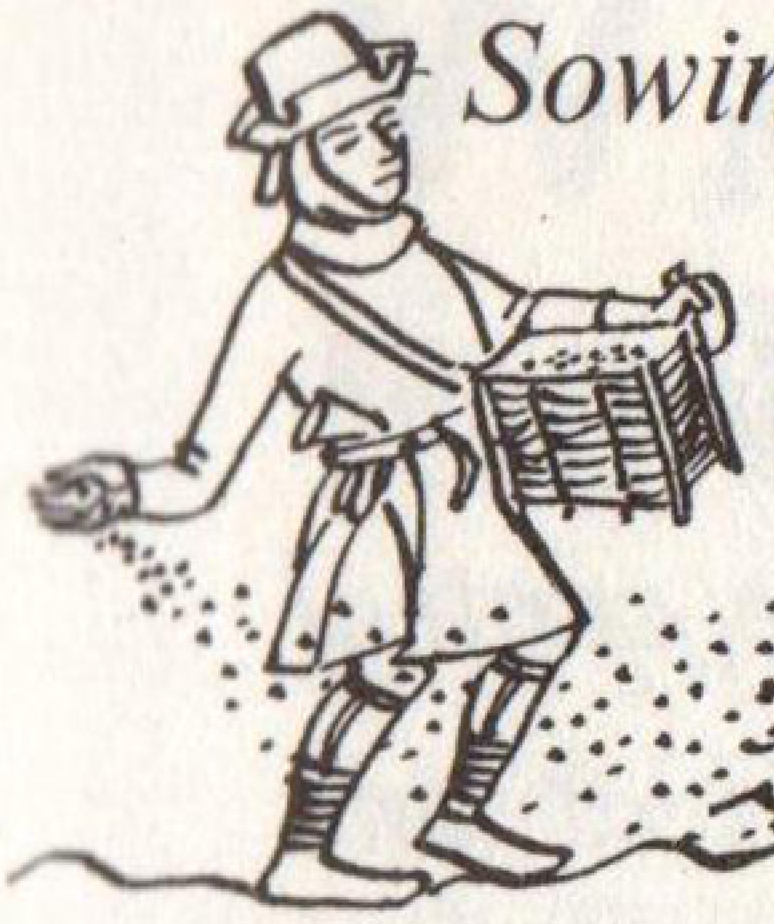

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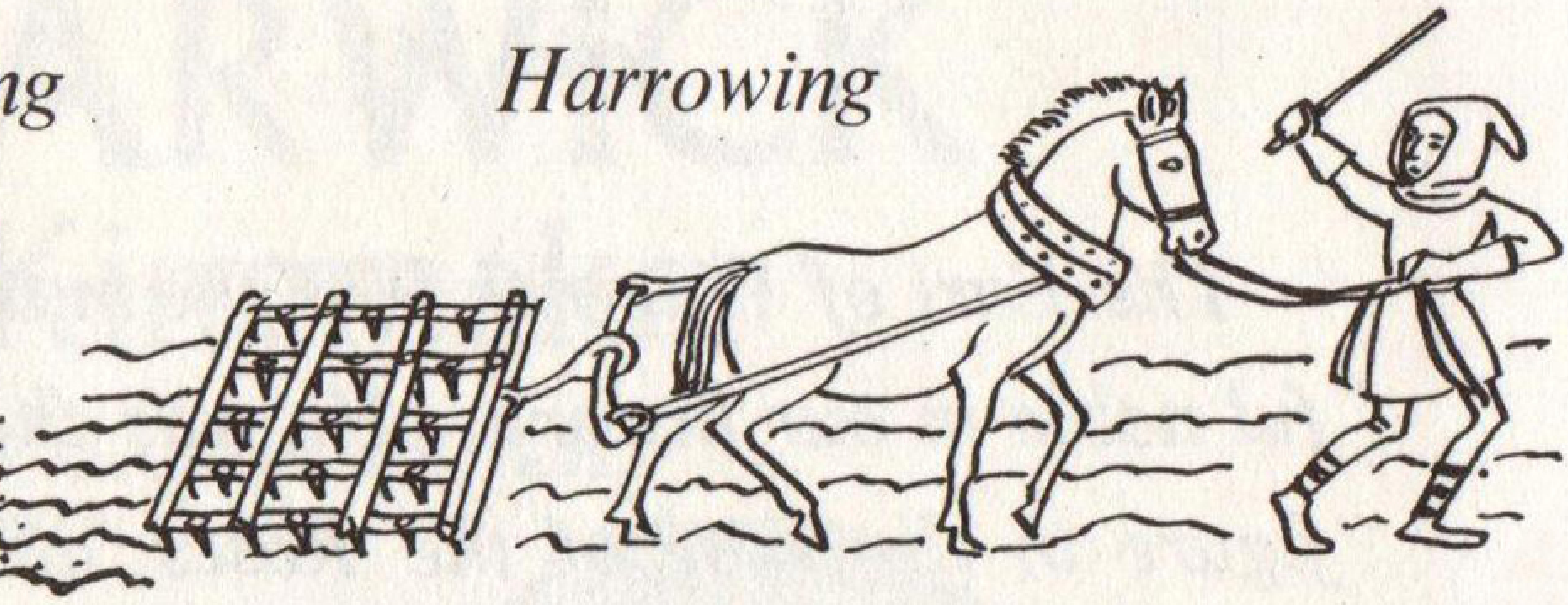

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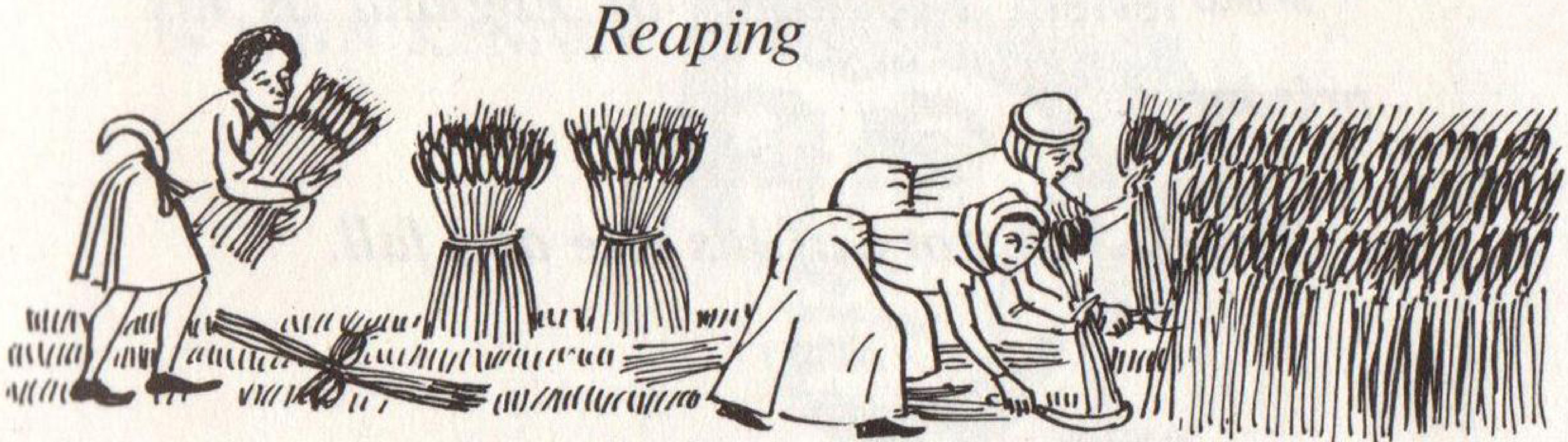

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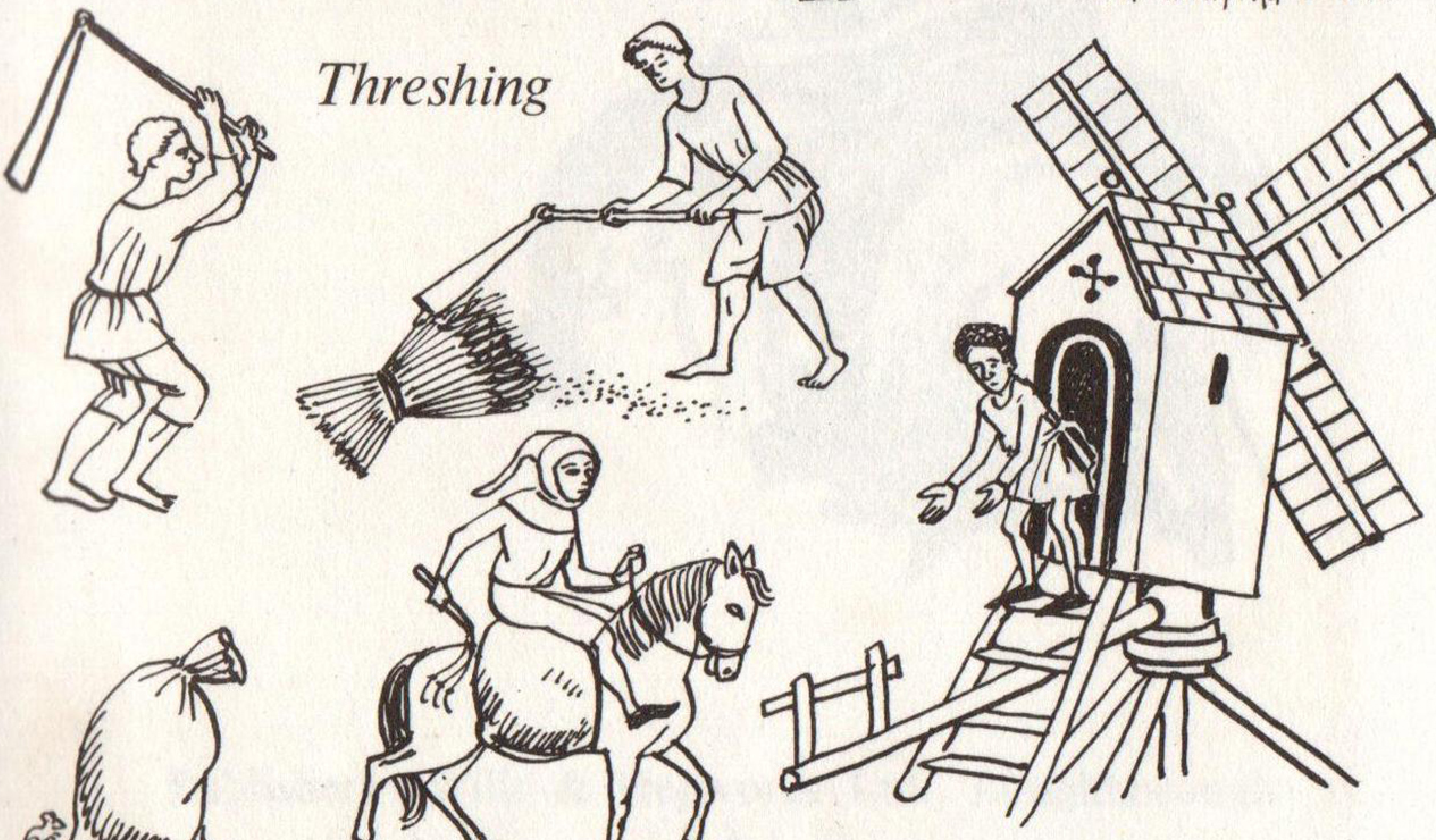

Threshing

Taking the corn to the Windmill

Series 561

The Earl of Warwick was the most powerful noble in our history. He was the central figure in the War of the Roses, and at one time he held two kings of England as his prisoners.

This is the story of his rise and fall.

WARWICK
the Kingmaker

by L. DU GARDE PEACH,
M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt.

with illustrations
by JOHN KENNEY

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WARWICK THE KINGMAKER

In the year 1428, there was born, probably in Wessex, a boy who was to become one of the greatest and most powerful nobles in the whole history of England. His name was Richard Neville.

We know little about his childhood. His father was the Earl of Salisbury, and he lived partly in London, and partly in Yorkshire. London was in those days very much smaller than it is to-day, with only about forty thousand inhabitants, and Yorkshire was many days journey away, over roads which in winter were often deep in mud.

The England in which Richard Neville lived as a young man was not a happy country. The King, Henry VI, was only nine months old when he came to the throne. As he was not old enough to rule, the great nobles who surrounded him were always fighting one another to get power.

As the King grew up he was found to be very weak-minded, and sometimes he was quite mad. But Richard Neville was strong and wise, and when he married Anne, the daughter of the Earl of Warwick, he succeeded to his father-in-law's title, and to the great castle of Warwick, which still stands to-day.

When two men have an equal right to a throne, there is certain to be trouble sooner or later. This was what happened in England more than five hundred years ago, because the Duke of York and King Henry were descended from two sons of Edward III; Edmund, Duke of York, and John, Duke of Lancaster.

Unfortunately the weak King had chosen a man whom nobody liked, the Earl of Somerset, as his chief counsellor.

The Duke of York, who was Warwick's uncle, was loyal to the King, but he hated the Earl of Somerset and those who were ruling the country badly in the King's name. Then one day they met by chance in a garden full of roses.

The two men were soon quarrelling bitterly. The Earl of Somerset gathered a rose and said, "Let those who are friends to Lancaster wear a red rose." Whereupon the Duke of York immediately plucked a white rose. "And those who are mine, a white," he cried. That is why this terrible civil war came to be called the War of the Roses, and why to this day the red rose is the badge of Lancashire, and the white rose of York.

King Henry, always feeble-minded, became quite mad, and for a time the Duke of York ruled the country wisely and well. He imprisoned the Earl of Somerset in the Tower of London, but when the King suddenly recovered, Somerset was released and restored to power. The Duke of York and Warwick were now in great danger.

England was governed in those days by what is called the Feudal System. This meant that all the men who lived and worked on the estates of a great noble, were obliged to fight for him when called upon. They were known as levies. There was no English army. Just as the yeoman had to fight for the knight, and the knight for his feudal lord, so the great nobles had to follow the King in the event of war.

York and Warwick gathered five thousand men and marched on London. They met Somerset's army at St. Albans, and the first battle of the War of the Roses was fought in the streets of the town.

It was won by Warwick, who led his men round to the back of the houses. They climbed over the garden walls and attacked Somerset's men in the rear.

The Earl of Somerset was killed in the fighting, and King Henry was wounded by an arrow. Henry was no fighter, and he was found after the battle hiding in the house of a tanner.

Warwick and the Duke of York were loyal to the King. When they found him they bowed low, and assured him that now that Somerset was dead, he had nothing to fear from them. Henry had been afraid that they had come to kill him, and when he found that their only desire was to serve him, he gave them back the high positions which they had previously held.

The victors returned to London, and it seemed that the country could now expect peace and good government. Unfortunately the Queen, Margaret of Anjou, a fierce and bitter woman, hated Warwick. When she heard that Somerset had been killed, and that York and Warwick were again in power, she determined on revenge.

Queen Margaret was often called the she-wolf of France. She was cruel and treacherous, and soon she was plotting to get rid of the Duke of York and Warwick. With the King once again in her power, she would be able to rule the country.

Warwick was now twenty-seven, and was popular with rich and poor alike. He had shown in the battle of St. Albans that he was a good soldier, and when he was made Captain of Calais, everybody felt that it was in safe hands.

All the great provinces of France won by Henry V had been lost under Henry VI. Only the port of Calais remained. It was therefore important to hold it, if ever again English armies were to be landed in France. It was described as the richest jewel in the English crown. Few of the thousands of tourists who now land at Calais every summer, remember that for hundreds of years it was as English as Dover.

It was not a peaceful command. Warwick had to be constantly on the watch, prepared to defend the town, or to march out and attack hostile French forces. He was always successful, and the French came to fear his name.

One of these exploits shows Warwick as the daring commander he was. Hearing that a French fleet of wine-ships was in the harbour at Etaples, forty miles down the coast, he marched there with eight hundred men and quickly captured them all.

Warwick was Captain of Calais for five adventurous years, but he made frequent visits to England. On one of these he had a very narrow escape from being killed.

The King and Queen were at Coventry, and Queen Margaret arranged for a large number of men-at-arms to be in the town. A friendly message was then sent to Warwick summoning him and the Duke of York to attend. The Queen hoped by this means to get her two chief enemies into her power. They could then be either killed or imprisoned.

Warwick did not trust the Queen. As he and York neared the town, they saw that there were many armed men camped around it. Pulling up his horse, Warwick glanced round at the little group of his own retainers. If treachery were intended, they would have little chance when they entered the narrow streets of Coventry.

At that moment a horseman galloped up and warned them that it was the Queen's intention to have them both killed. The warning was only just in time. Looking back towards the town, Warwick saw numbers of mounted men-at-arms riding out to surround them. Turning their horses, Warwick and York galloped away to safety.

King Henry did not know that the Queen had been plotting to have Warwick killed. He was a very good and saintly man; it was said of him that he was better suited to be a priest than a king.

He knew that there were bitter feelings between the Queen and Warwick, although he himself had quite forgiven both York and Warwick for fighting against him at St. Albans. All he desired was that there should be peace, and that all the people in England should be prosperous and happy.

So he summoned a meeting in London, at which he commanded that everyone was to be friendly with everyone else, including the Queen and Warwick. To make sure that they remained friendly, the Lord Mayor armed five thousand of the citizens of London. He knew that if there was any trouble, the city would be the first to suffer.

Warwick rode to London at the head of six hundred veteran fighting men, but there was no fighting. The most bitter enemies walked hand in hand in a procession through the city, and all the citizens cheered. Everything looked very friendly and peaceful, but behind the smiles of Warwick and Queen Margaret were hatred and thoughts of revenge.

For a time Warwick was in favour again. He was made Chief Captain to Guard the Sea, which we to-day would call Admiral of the Fleet.

Not that there was any fleet. In the days of Henry VI, England did not have enough ships even to protect her own coasts, and the French frequently raided the English ports, burning the towns and killing the people.

However, the French and the pirates of all nations who swarmed in the English Channel met their match in the Earl of Warwick. He was a brave and daring soldier on land, and he soon proved that he was just as daring at sea. Gathering together about fourteen small ships, he manned them with some of his toughest soldiers. With this little fleet he boldly put to sea.

He soon swept the English Channel free of enemy ships. Unfortunately he was equally ready to engage and capture the ships of countries with which England was not at war. In one engagement he attacked five large Spanish ships, capturing three of them, and killing about a thousand Spaniards. When on another occasion he boarded ships from Lübeck, in defiance of a treaty signed only two years before, it got him into serious trouble.

The citizens of Lübeck naturally complained to Henry VI, and he sent for Warwick, who crossed from Calais quite prepared to justify anything he had done. How he would have explained away his attacks on the shipping of friendly nations, we do not know. He probably relied on the kindly nature of King Henry himself.

The King received Warwick with friendly courtesy, but the grim looks of the King's Councillors, and the scowling face of Queen Margaret, warned him that he was not amongst friends. He was right.

The Council was sitting, discussing with Warwick the matter of the captured ships, when the sound of shouting and brawling was heard in the courtyard outside. Warwick rose and went to see what was happening.

He found that some of the retainers belonging to his enemies on the Council had picked a quarrel with the servants whom he had brought with him. These were hemmed in and fighting desperately for their lives. Drawing his sword, Warwick cut his way through to them and quickly dispersed their opponents. With drawn swords, Warwick and his men marched to their barge on the Thames, and escaped what had clearly been a treacherous attempt to murder him.

Warwick rode northwards to his castle at Warwick, and there he took counsel with his father, the Earl of Salisbury, and with the Duke of York. They decided to call up their retainers and, if possible, repeat the success of St. Albans and rescue the King from his evil counsellors.

The Queen, fearing the vengeance of Warwick, gathered an army to resist him. A further outbreak of war between the white rose and the red now seemed certain, and when Warwick brought two hundred men-at-arms and four hundred archers from Calais, it was not long in breaking out.

Warwick and York still protested that they were loyal to the King, and together they took an oath in Worcester Cathedral to fight only to rid him of the evil men who surrounded him.

The two armies met near Ludlow, but when King Henry promised to pardon all the soldiers who laid down their arms, Warwick's army melted away. He had put his chief trust in the soldiers whom he had brought over from Calais, but when the levies raised by Warwick in England fled from the field, they too deserted. Any hope of victory for Warwick was now at an end.

There was nothing for it but flight. Warwick and the Duke of York rode along lanes and small cross-roads, avoiding all towns and villages. But the King's men were close on their heels, and they were obliged to separate for safety. Warwick and his cousin, Edward Plantagenet, son of the Duke of York, together with three followers, rode hard to Barnstaple in Devon. York and his men made for Ireland.

At Barnstaple, Warwick and Edward engaged a small boat, saying that they wished to sail to Bristol. No sooner were they at sea, however, than they ordered the captain to turn south and take them to France.

The captain refused, saying that he had never rounded Land's End and knew nothing about the course for France. But Warwick and his men were armed, and the captain had no choice but to obey. The sails filled on the new course as the helm was put hard over.

It was Warwick, and not the captain who took the helm. As Captain of the Sea he had learnt to navigate a ship, and after a stay at Guernsey waiting for a favourable wind, they reached Calais only twenty days after leaving Ludlow.

For a time Warwick was safe in Calais, easily defeating such forces as Queen Margaret sent against him. He even organised an expedition to Sandwich, in England, and captured the ships which were being fitted out to attack him in Calais.

Meanwhile the Duke of York had reached Ireland, where he was recruiting an army. Whilst returning from a meeting with him, where it was decided that he and Warwick should invade England from two sides, Warwick with a few ships met with a whole fleet, sent out by Queen Margaret to intercept him. But when Warwick turned to attack them, they sailed away.

Once back in Calais, Warwick lost no time. He landed in Kent with two thousand men, and was soon joined by many thousands more as he marched on London. The men of Kent were tired of the misrule of England by Queen Margaret and her favourites.

So also were the citizens of London. When Warwick appeared, they drove the Lancastrian garrison into the Tower, and opened the gates of the city. The King was at Coventry, but Warwick again proclaimed that he had come only to save King Henry from the men who were ruining the country.

Warwick was in possession of London, but there had been no fighting. The weak, unwarlike King and his bitter Queen, Warwick's real enemy, still had an army in the north. Warwick knew that until he destroyed it, and had the King in his power, there would be no peace in England.

He marched quickly to Northampton, and soon the two armies were face to face. Warwick was anxious not to shed English blood, but his offers of a peaceful settlement were refused. Nothing but his death would satisfy Queen Margaret.

Warwick gave the order to attack, telling his men to spare the common soldiers, and kill only the knights and nobles who led them. It was they, the friends of Queen Margaret, and the enemies of good government in England, of whom Warwick was determined to be rid.

At first the battle went against Warwick. Then, as happened so often in the War of the Roses, one of the leaders of the Queen's army deserted and joined Warwick's men. This decided the battle. King Henry, feeble, helpless, and deserted by his Queen, was captured sitting in a tent. Margaret and her son escaped, riding as hard as they could towards Wales.

Warwick escorted the King to London, and did homage to him as a loyal subject, only insisting that he himself must henceforth be the King's chief counsellor. The King was obliged to agree.

The future looked bright. Peace had come to England, and Warwick was strong enough to keep it. Then suddenly the Duke of York arrived in London, followed by the army which he had raised in Ireland, and claimed the throne for himself.

Everything Warwick had done had been with the object of keeping Henry on the throne of England: to him this claim by the Duke of York was treason. He reasoned with York for many hours in private, and finally York gave up his claim, on condition that he was named as heir to the throne when Henry should die.

Queen Margaret naturally expected that her son would succeed Henry on the throne of England. When word was brought to her that the Duke of York was to be the next heir, her fury made her attendants fear for her health. She knew that this was Warwick's doing, and her hatred and her determination to be revenged increased tenfold. She was well named the she-wolf of France.

Queen Margaret was a woman who never gave in. Whilst Warwick was setting up a new government in London, she had gathered another army in the north, chiefly composed of Scots, always ready to fight against England.

Many of the northern nobles joined her because they were jealous of Warwick. Finally the Queen's army became so dangerous that the Duke of York marched north to meet it. A battle was fought at Wakefield where the Duke of York was killed, and the Earl of Salisbury, Warwick's father, captured and executed.

It was a horrible custom of those days to cut off the heads of traitors and mount them on pikes over the city gates. Queen Margaret's followers set the heads of York and Salisbury over the gate of the city of York, and Margaret herself gave orders that a space be left for Warwick's head.

First she had to catch him, and though she marched south and beat his army at St. Albans, where he had won the day six years before, Warwick escaped. Poor King Henry, who never seemed to know what to do in a battle, was found sitting under a tree. Once more he was in the Queen's power.

London lay open to the Queen's army, but for some reason she turned north again, and Warwick, together with the Duke of York's son, Edward, quickly occupied the city.

Warwick was troubled. Twice he had captured Henry and proved his own loyalty by placing him on the throne. He knew, as everyone else in England knew, that Henry was unsuited to rule. The citizens of London, busy buying and selling in the narrow and often filthy streets of the old city, cared very little who was on the throne, provided they were free to carry on their business in peace and without interference.

The young Duke of York, Edward Plantagenet, his own cousin, and with a better claim to the throne than the Lancastrian Henry, was youthful and vigorous, and had proved himself to be a good commander. After long and anxious thought, Warwick came to a decision.

He decided to crown Edward, and in London, on a windy day in March, in the year 1461, Edward of York became Edward IV of England. There were now two kings at the same time. The question was which of them was to continue to rule. The answer lay with Warwick, now known as the Kingmaker.

Although King Henry was ineffective, Queen Margaret was still dangerous. Two days after the coronation of Edward IV, Warwick was again marching north at the head of an army.

The route of the Queen's retreat could be followed by the blazing villages, set on fire by the wild Scots of her army. They had stolen everything on which they could lay their hands, and the men of the midlands, furiously angry and determined on vengeance, joined Warwick in their thousands.

Queen Margaret was overtaken near Tadcaster in Yorkshire. In the dusk of a March morning, with the snow falling heavily, Warwick led his men to the attack. Fortune favoured him. The gusty wind blew the snow in the faces of the Lancastrian bowmen, so that they could not see to aim. So strong was the wind that their arrows all fell short, whilst the Yorkist arrows, with the wind behind them, did terrible execution.

Warwick fought on foot in the thick of the battle, and the arrival of reinforcements decided the day in his favour. It was the fiercest battle of the war, and the victory was shared equally by Warwick and the new King Edward.

Queen Margaret again escaped, this time to Scotland. With her was the unfortunate King, a king without a kingdom, and with a rival firmly seated on his throne. Their cause seemed hopeless. Most of the nobles who supported them had been killed at Tadcaster, or executed afterwards.

The Scots and the French were their only hope. Both were always ready to fight against England, and though the French King was still waiting to see which side would win, the Scots kept Warwick busy by raiding across the border.

Whilst Queen Margaret lived, Warwick could never be completely easy, but for four years he was the real ruler of a more or less peaceful England. King Edward, who was twenty years old, was content to enjoy life and leave everything to Warwick. As Warwick was both wise and honest, it was an excellent arrangement.

Margaret was in France, and in order to get the French King on his side, Warwick arranged a marriage between Edward and a French princess. Everything was settled, with Edward's consent, when suddenly he announced that he was already secretly married to Elizabeth Woodville. Warwick was very angry, but his loyalty to Edward prevented any open quarrel.

The unfortunate King Henry had been wandering about aimlessly in the north, and at last he was betrayed and captured in Lancashire. He was brought to London and imprisoned in the Tower by Warwick, who led him through the streets with his feet bound to the stirrups.

King Edward had long ceased to listen to the advice of the man who had put him on the throne. All the high offices of state were filled by the relations of Elizabeth Woodville. This was both foolish and ungrateful on Edward's part, and he now gave Warwick further cause for annoyance by refusing to allow the Duke of Clarence, heir to the throne, to marry Warwick's daughter.

As though this were not enough, he sent Warwick to France to arrange a treaty of peace with the French King. No sooner was Warwick out of the way than Edward made a treaty with the Duke of Burgundy, the enemy of France. Edward seemed to be doing all he could to annoy the man to whom he owed everything.

When Warwick returned and learnt what the King had done, he took to his barge and returned to his great London house.

Warwick retired to his estates. He was as honest and upright a man as ever lived in England, but he saw that only the same means that had rid Henry of his evil advisers, would serve in this case. With deep sorrow he faced the need for further warfare in England.

Warwick had a number of castles and some thousands of retainers and servants. We are told there were so many of them that they ate six oxen every day for breakfast.

The people of England saw with disgust the way in which the country was being robbed by Elizabeth Woodville's relatives. Thousands were ready to rise in revolt the moment Warwick gave the word.

Edward knew nothing of what was threatened, and was completely taken by surprise. After a short campaign, during which many of his soldiers deserted to Warwick, he was captured at Olney. Warwick treated him with all the deference due to the King, but once in Warwick Castle, he was in fact Warwick's prisoner. With Henry in the Tower of London, this great nobleman now had two Kings of England as his prisoners, a thing which had never happened before, and which could certainly never happen again.

Warwick could have made himself Dictator of England, as Cromwell did later, or even King if he had so wished. But he was loyal to the throne, so long as whoever was on it ruled for the good of England.

Edward was brought back to London and for a time he reigned with Warwick as his chief minister. All seemed to be well, but when King Edward raised a large army to put down a rising in Lincoln, the peace of England was suddenly broken again. Warwick was at Warwick Castle when Edward, who had never forgotten his defeat at Olney, declared him a traitor.

There was not time for Warwick to gather and arm his men. Edward was marching to surround him. With the Duke of Clarence, who had married his daughter in defiance of Edward, he fled to the south coast with Edward's soldiers hot on his heels.

From Dartmouth he sailed to Calais, and finding the port held against him, to Honfleur. From here he went to solicit the help of Louis, King of France, the most cunning man who ever sat on a throne. King Louis listened to Warwick, but he had a better plan of his own.

King Louis knew that neither Edward nor Warwick would ever trust one another again. Queen Margaret was in France. Why should he not bring Margaret and Warwick together, invade England, and put Henry back on the throne?

This was Louis' plan. He wanted to keep England weak, so that she could never again invade France as Henry V had done. To encourage civil war in England seemed to him the best way of doing it.

Probably no two individuals ever hated one another so bitterly, and with so much cause, as Warwick and Queen Margaret. She had murdered his father and his uncle; he had driven her from the throne and imprisoned her husband in the Tower. The only bond between them was that both now hated Edward.

It seemed impossible that Warwick and Queen Margaret could ever meet without quarrelling bitterly, but Louis had another plan up his sleeve. He suggested that Margaret's son should marry Warwick's second daughter. The cunning part of this plan was that whichever won, Edward or Henry, one or other of Warwick's daughters would be Queen of England. Margaret knew that with Warwick's help, Henry might again be King. Everyone was pleased, except Clarence.

The invasion of England by Warwick was a complete success. The army raised by Edward to oppose him, changed sides as soon as they saw Warwick's banners appear. Edward fled to Holland with only the clothes he was wearing. The story goes that with no money, he had to pay the captain of the ship by giving him his rich fur-lined cloak.

Warwick was now once more master of England, and the poor, sick, and half-mad Henry was again King. A writer at the time described him as sitting on the throne "limp and helpless as a sack of wool".

Edward had not given up hope. With about two thousand English and foreign troops he landed in Yorkshire. No-one wanted to see civil war again, so Edward swore he had only come to claim his rights as Duke of York.

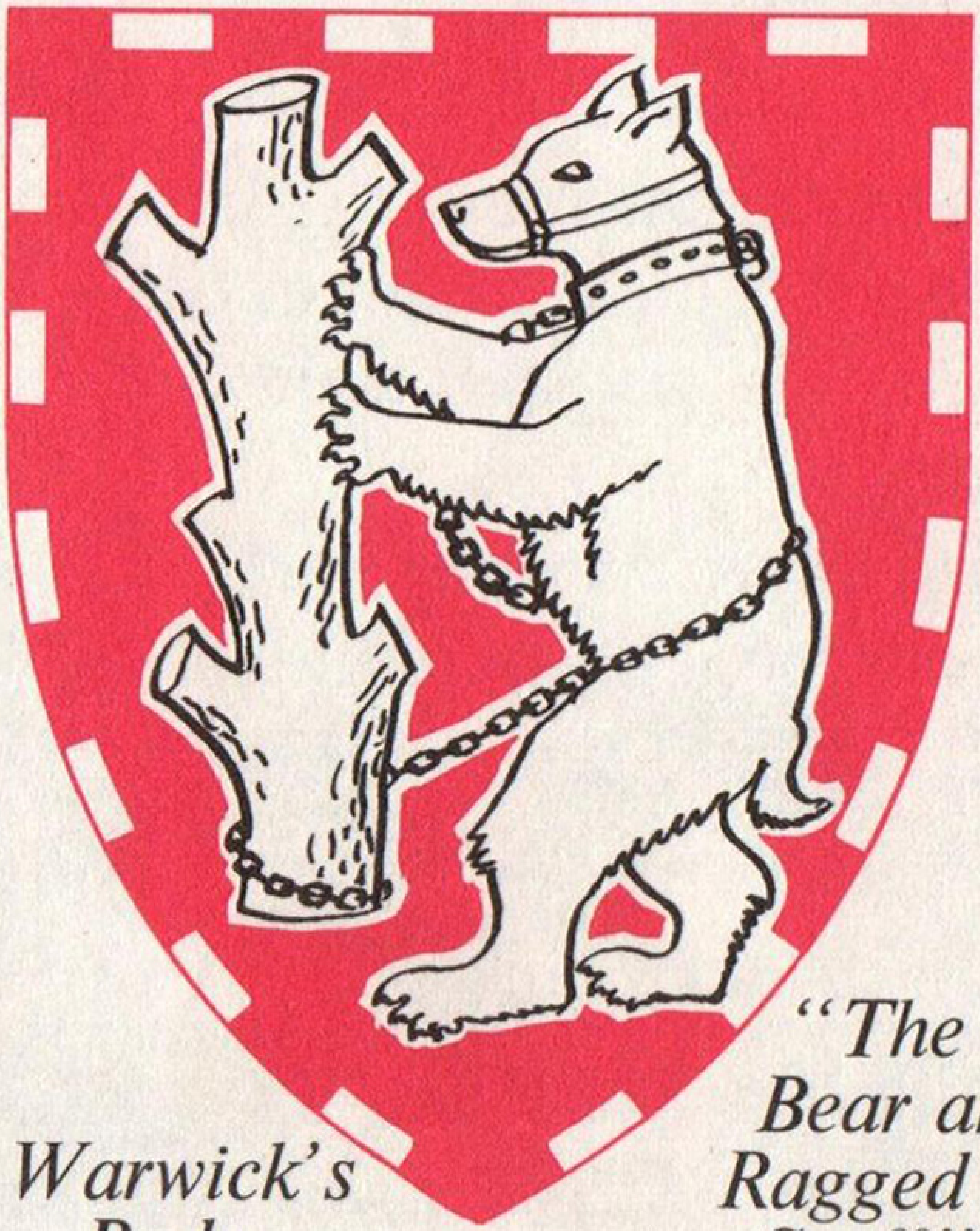
Warwick did not trust him. He knew very well that if Edward were successful, he would claim the throne. He was right. At Nottingham Edward had himself proclaimed as King. The old Yorkists joined him in large numbers. Not the least of them was his brother Clarence, thus doubly a traitor, who deserted Warwick in his hour of need.

It was a bitter day for Warwick when he saw so many of his old friends and comrades-in-arms joining Edward.

Nor was he able quickly to gather a force strong enough to oppose them. By a rapid and skilful march Edward reached London, whilst Warwick was still at Coventry waiting for reinforcements.

Warwick knew that every day counted. So with what troops he had, he marched south to Barnet, and here the two armies met. In the darkness they crept close to one another and lay quiet, waiting for the day, though Warwick kept his clumsy cannon firing all night. Edward did not reply, so as not to give away his position.

Easter Day dawned, and in thick fog, the battle was joined. At first Warwick seemed to be getting the best of it, but in the confusion his own men started attacking one another. Immediately the cry of treachery was raised. It had happened too often in the War of the Roses not to be believed. Panic spread through Warwick's army. They were utterly defeated, and near St. Albans, where he had won the day sixteen years before, the great Earl of Warwick, truly called the Kingmaker, was killed.



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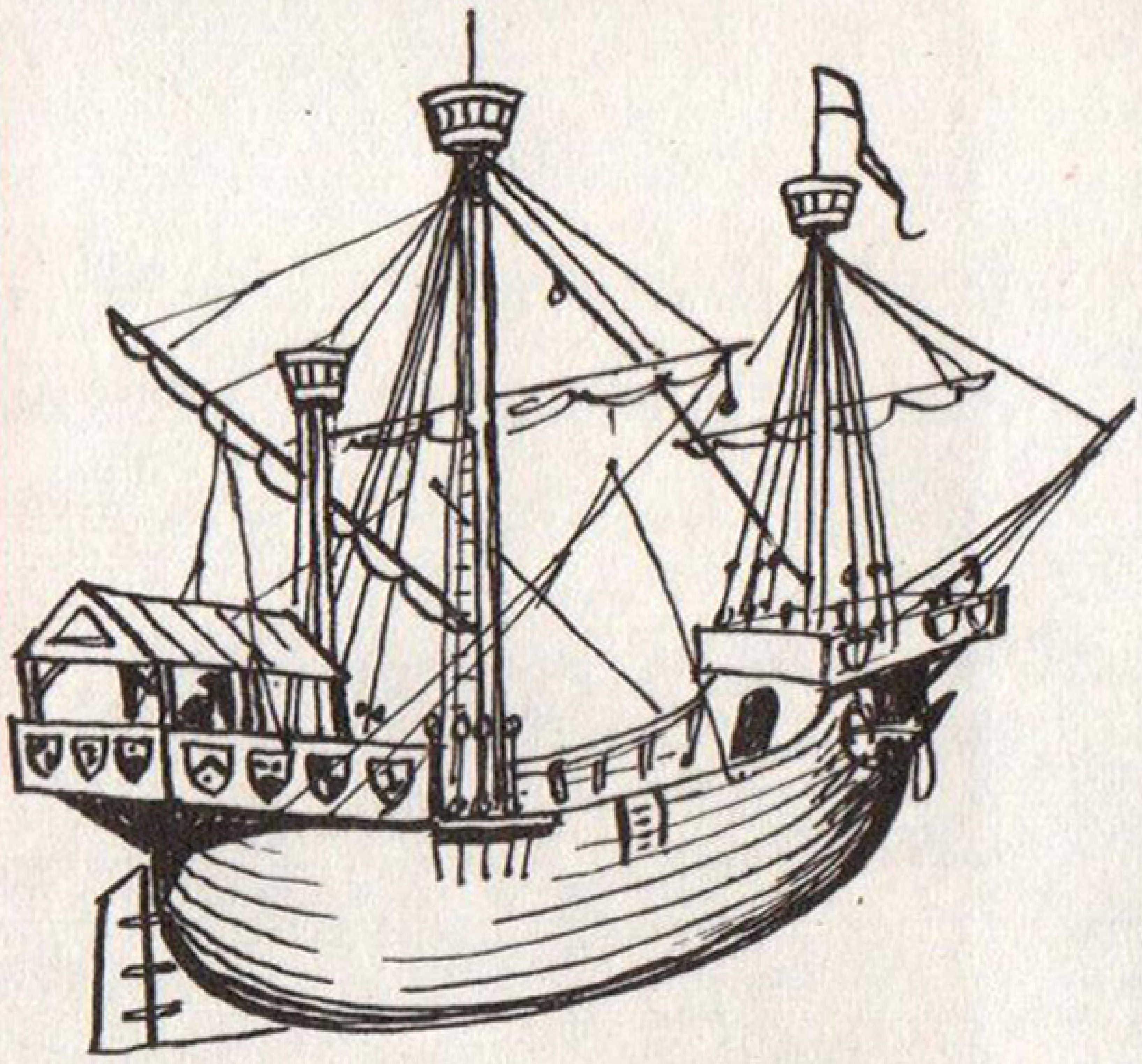

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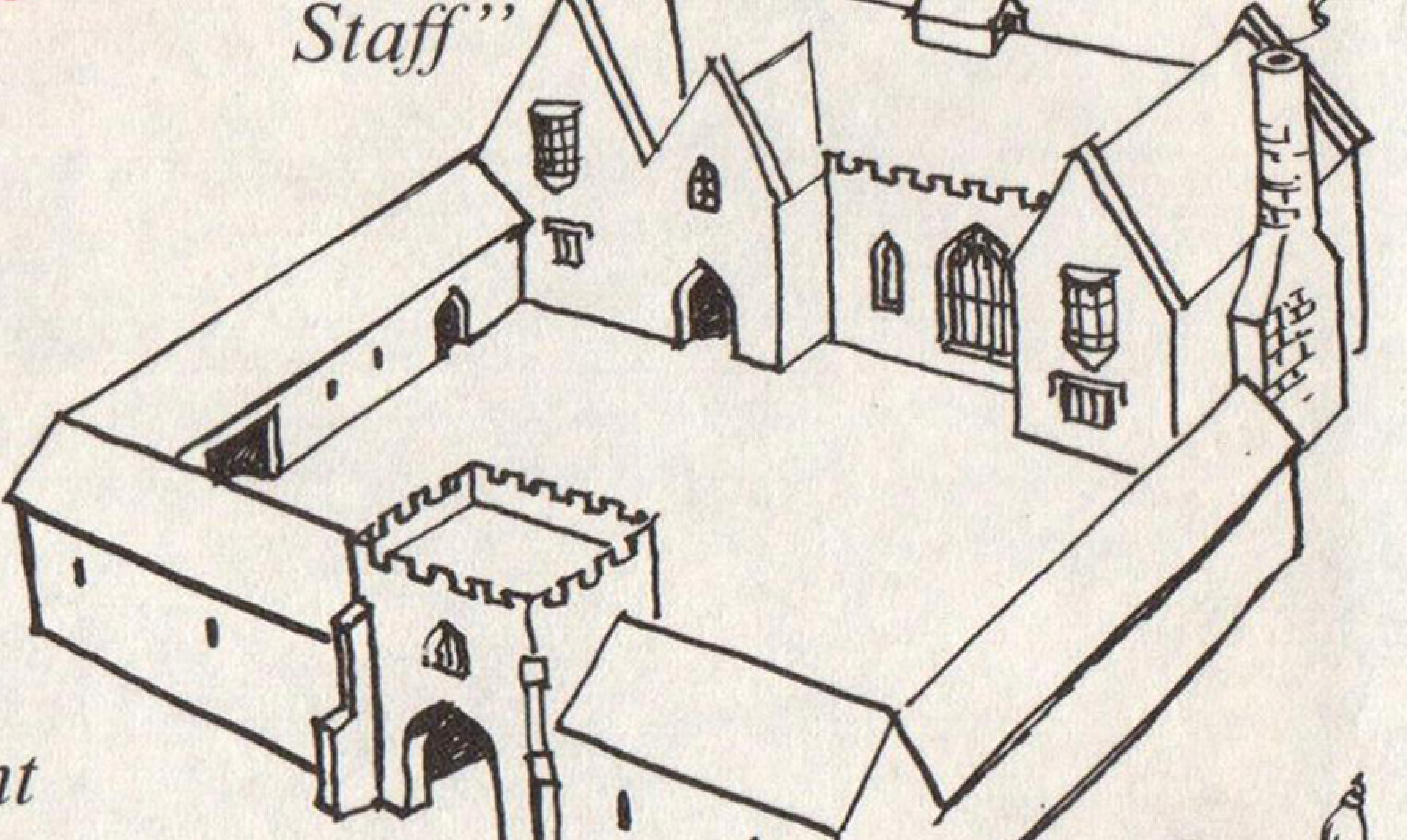

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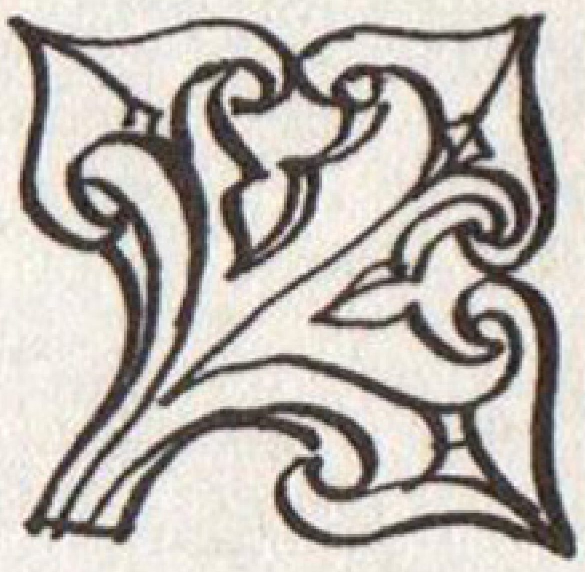

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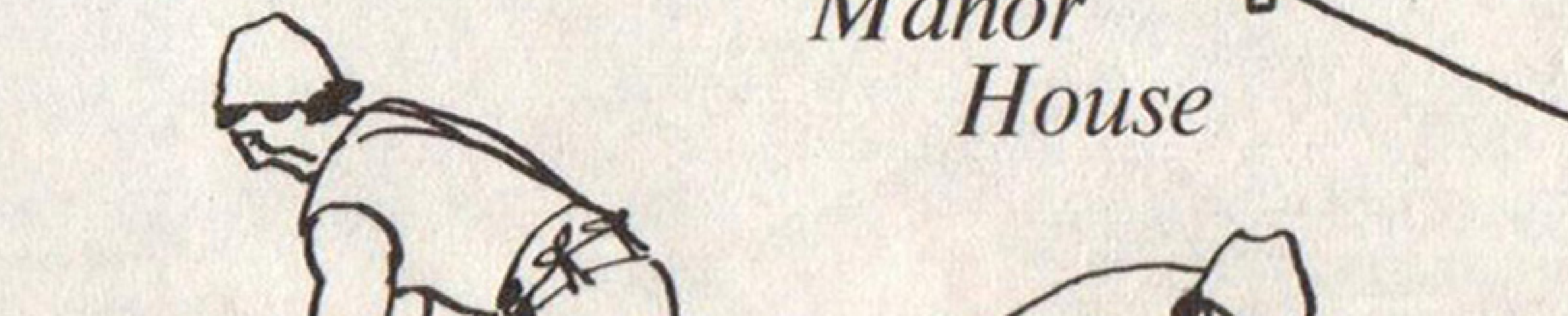
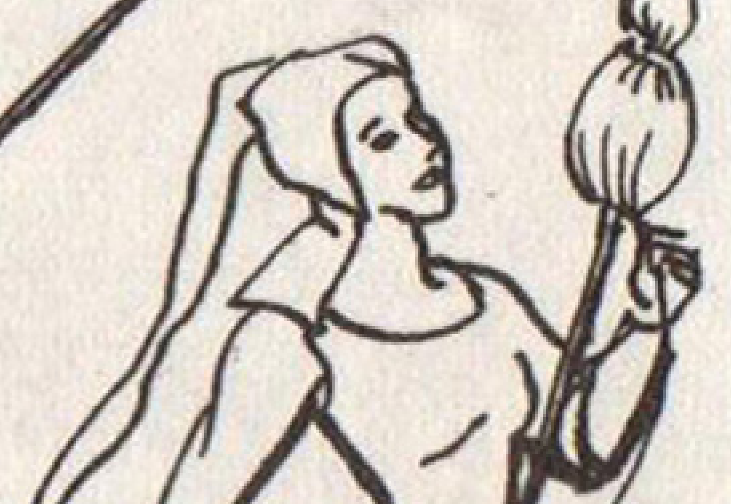


Carpenters



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